

## **NHACD Update:**

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Since the last State Technical Meeting, NHACD has put on our **Annual Meeting** event, this year in Claremont at the Common Man Inn on the Sugar River. 135 people attended with special guest and Cover Crop expert Steve Groff from Pennsylvania giving the keynote presentation and a workshop. Topics and speakers in general were focused on soil health. Rep. Annie Kuster came to address our group on the second day.

**The NH Envirothon Challenge** for 2017 has been announced and its theme is: "Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation Stewardship." This year, the challenge will involve the conservation districts in that the students will have to contact their local District office to determine one or more local farms that can serve as the focus of their study. They will learn to use the Web Soil Survey to map existing soils and land use and will learn about BMP's that are currently implemented in their focus area. The goal is to get students involved in their communities.

**The Long Island Sound Watershed-Regional Conservation Partnership Program project** is going forward in higher gear now. Our launching event for this RCPP, then, was incorporated into our Annual Meeting in October. We have had numerous telephone conferences and are forming partnerships to work on this project.

Last week, we had an all-day meeting in Woodstock, VT. with 37 participants from VT, NH, and CT., including participating staff from DES, UNHCE, USDA-NRCS, NHACD, VACD, VT DEC, Ct. River Watershed Farmer's Alliance, NH and VT Depts of AG, Markets & Food, CT River Watershed Council, the Ct. CSWC, EPA, and the participating watershed conservation districts in VT and NH.

The purpose was for participants to gain a deeper understanding of:

- the nitrogen nutrient cycle and the negative water quality

- impacts of excess nitrogen
- the Connecticut River TMDL and its relevance to the LISW-RCPP program
- the use of Adapt-N to assist farmers in managing nitrogen on the farm
- Long Island Sound and its Watershed, including natural resource assets and concerns, and
- the LISW-RCPP program as a whole and specific plans and results to date in VT and NH.

Another important (and successful!) outcome of the meeting was that the participants had the opportunity to network with colleagues on both sides of the CT River, learn about each other's work, and discuss potential areas of further collaboration on this project. We plan to have another comprehensive meeting like this next year sometime; New Hampshire will organize (NHACD).

NHACD is in the process now of finalizing the position description for a 3-year term agronomist who we will hire for the Soil Health component of the LISW-RCPP. This individual will work with the districts and NRCS to provide technical assistance to farmers in the CT. River Watershed. All 4 NH counties in the Watershed – Cheshire, Sullivan, Grafton, and Coos – are participating in this project.

NHACD's Conservation Innovation Grant project "Promoting and Implementing No-till and Cover Crop Systems in New Hampshire" is also underway with the anticipated delivery this week of one 2-row roller crimper and three 4-row roller crimpers made by Dawn Biologic fully installed on no-till seeders. Conservation Districts will offer demonstration workshops in the spring of 2017, four producers will be selected to participate in the trial program, while others will have the ability to try-out the equipment through a rental program. The trials will continue for a period of three years. Results will be compiled into a final report and made available to all interested producers and conservation organizations.

The primary Objectives of this project is to:

1. Educate interested New Hampshire producers on the idea of adopting reduced-till/no-till methods of farming. While some are familiar and already implementing, we aim to use these producers and their operations as a model to educate and attract new interest.
2. Show farmers that adopting a reduced-till/no-till system can be economical.
3. Demonstrate an efficient way to terminate cover crops in the spring while simultaneously planting new seed.
4. Offer the ability for any farmer statewide to trial the reduced-till/no-till methods in their own operations.
5. Collect and compile data from producers using the new equipment. Favorable results will encourage producers statewide to adopt new no-till/cover crop methods.

Our intent is to make these 4 pieces of equipment available to farmers and to get coverage to all major growing areas in the state. Dorn Cox of Tuckaway Farm in Strafford County is coordinator of this CIG. He is also a NACD "Soil Health Champion" ---- and VP of NHACD.

We are gearing up for the NACD Annual Meeting in Denver at end of January. NH has had a strong presence at these meetings in the past 8 years or so and the learning and networking available from this resource pool has been invaluable.

NHACD is also looking forward to hosting the New England Leadership Meeting in Portsmouth again this March. Our first planning committee call on Friday reflected, among the conservation leaders of the 6 states, the uncertainty of future voluntary conservation. In preparing a possible agenda, questions arose as to how do we manage the changes likely to come in the new administration?; is it going to be Farm Bill as usual next time?; will the changing regulatory environment be coming to NH, as it is in Pennsylvania and Vermont?

It is always our pleasure to host this special annual meeting, which

has been going on since the 1960's!